

a number of organizations, respected organizations, that disagree about a very sensitive, totally new issue before the Congress, the Senate certainly should move carefully to evaluate the consequences of its actions.

I spoke with the President of the United States about this matter twice on Monday. I was pleased to read the comments of the President expressing concern about the bill's impact on pain care and on physicians. I am absolutely convinced that if this legislation were to become law, there would be many health care providers in this country who are opposed to physician-assisted suicide, as I am, who would be very fearful about treating pain aggressively because the Nickles legislation criminalizes decisions with respect to pain management.

The people of Oregon, who have a ballot in their hand such as this one right now, want to know that this ballot really counts. The people of Oregon, in coffee shops and beauty parlors all over the State, when they are considering how to vote right now, are asking themselves: Does this ballot really count? When we vote on a matter that is critical to us, particularly on a measure that has historically been left to the States, we want to make sure that people 3,000 miles away won't substitute their personal moral and religious beliefs for ours on a matter that has historically been left to us to decide.

I can tell the people of Oregon now that their vote still counts. As of today, whether you vote for my party or the party of Senator NICKLES, it doesn't matter. This ballot, as of this morning in the State of Oregon, still counts, regardless of whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, a Liberal, a Conservative, Independent. Regardless of your political persuasion, as of now in the State of Oregon, this ballot still counts.

Your vote is important. I hope folks at home exercise that right. Their vote still means something. I am going to do my best to see that it continues to count when Congress reconvenes after the election.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT DEPENDENCE

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, as the Senator from Oregon is leaving the floor, I thank him for the cooperation and bipartisan work he and I were able to accomplish this year, through the Forests and Public Land Management Subcommittee that I chair on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, by passing and yesterday having the President sign the community school district dependent bill that goes a long way toward stabilizing our schools and our county governments within the rural resource dependent communities of the western public land States.

Mr. WYDEN. Will the Senator yield briefly?

Mr. CRAIG. I am happy to yield.

Mr. WYDEN. I appreciate my colleague yielding. I thank him for the extraordinary bipartisan approach he has taken throughout this session.

I think 18 months ago, when the session began and we were tackling the county payments question, particularly rural schools and roads, nobody thought we could put together a bipartisan coalition. Two sides were completely dug in. One side said we should totally divorce these payments from any connection to the land; others went the other way and said let's try to incentivize a higher cut. I believe the Senator from Idaho, in giving me the opportunity that he has as the ranking Democrat on the forestry subcommittee, has shown that we can take a fresh approach on these natural resources issues—in particular, timber.

I appreciate my colleague yielding me the time. I am looking forward to working with him again next session because it was an exhilarating moment to have the first major natural resources bill in decades come to the floor of the Senate, as our legislation did.

I thank my colleague for letting me intrude on his time. I have had a chance to be part of a historic effort with my friend from Idaho, and it has been a special part of my public service. I thank him for that.

Mr. CRAIG. I thank the Senator from Oregon. Both he and I have learned that when you try to change a law that is actually 92 years old, or adjust it a little bit, it is difficult to do. We were able to do that. Next year, there will be a good number of challenges on public lands and natural resource issues. I look forward to working with Senator WYDEN.

ELECTRICITY PRICE SPIKES

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I very recently came to the floor and expressed my grave concern about the reliability of affordable electricity. I am not alone in my concerns about this issue. Indeed, some of the loudest voices expressing similar concerns about energy prices are coming from not just Idaho but California, and specifically from my distinguished colleagues from California here in the Senate.

By my comments today, I do not diminish or in any way cast doubt about the substantial hardships experienced by the ratepayers in California, particularly southern California. Indeed, I have great empathy for them, primarily because Pacific Northwest ratepayers are bracing for power shortages in the near future that will cause energy prices to soar and hurt large and small businesses alike and put some residential customers in danger, especially during the cold and hot periods of the year in our region of the Pacific Northwest. I share equal concerns with the citizens of California.

We must confront the obvious facts facing all energy consumers today.

There is an energy supply crisis in the United States. It is clear that the administration didn't see it coming, or at least ignored it. We in the Congress heard no alarms from the Department of Energy and were given not enough warning during the last 8 years that an energy supply crisis was about to threaten the electrical industry of our country.

One of the very few pieces of energy legislation that was sent to Congress for review and passage was the administration's Comprehensive Electrical Competition Act in April 1999. This legislation was purported to result in \$20 billion in savings a year to America's energy consumers. However, this legislation would not have precluded the crisis in California, the kind that Californians experienced this summer. Indeed, the legislation was full of mandates and rules that didn't offer any economic incentives or investments in new supplies.

Moreover, the legislation included a renewable portfolio mandate that did not include cheap hydropower as a renewable. I know the Presiding Officer and I talked about it at that time—that all of a sudden we had an administration that was not going to include hydropower as a renewable. This renewable portfolio requirement would have made electricity more expensive and more scarce to the consumer. Part of the problem in California appears to be that it is unwilling to accept the tradeoff of high prices required by environmental regulations. Either the tough environmental standards that currently exist in California are an acceptable cost of energy consumption or California must make necessary environmental adjustments for more abundant supplies at a cheaper price.

In addition, the administration must reexamine the use of the price caps that apparently have caused the supply problems in California.

Mr. President, these are some of the reasons why the legislation failed to get the desired support in Congress from a majority of the Members which included many Democrats as well as Republicans. We recognized you simply can't just go out and say here is the energy, what it is going to cost, cap it at prices, and put all these environmental restrictions on it. It is going to ultimately get to the consumer and, boy, did it get to them in California this summer. Many of us were justifiably concerned about the impact such legislation would have on the current electrical supply network that supports the most reliable electric service found anywhere in the world.

The administration did not adequately explain how the legislation would prevent energy supply problems from occurring if its legislation was passed—perhaps because it simply didn't have an adequate explanation or, if it knew the facts, it certainly wasn't willing to have them known publicly.